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ISLAM

THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY

BY

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*Author of an English Translation of the Holy Quran,
Muhammad the Prophet, &c.*

WITH A FOREWORD BY

LORD HEADLEY.

LAHORE :

THE AHMADIYYA ANJUMAN ISHA'AT ISLAM.

Second Edition of the Holy Quran

(WITH ARABIC TEXT)

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MUHAMMAD ALI,
President.

FOREWORD.

With very great pleasure I have read the Maulvi Muhammad Ali's excellent epitome of Islamic teaching, and I am much impressed by the ability he has shown in condensing, within the space of a few pages, all the essentials of our religion: the simplicity and sincerity of the work cannot but commend it to all those who are earnestly searching for the truth. There is a distinct need of such a concise exposition of Islam, for, notwithstanding the march of education and intelligent reasoning on religious subjects, there still remains in this country a lamentable amount of ignorance respecting the Muslim religion.

To a great extent this is due to the misrepresentations of those who really know, but wilfully mislead the Western mind respecting our faith. Some of the fallacies resulting from this unworthy practice of misrepresentation are that Muslims worship Muhammad, that polygamy is a part of the Islamic religion, and that women have no souls. Only the other day I heard a conversation between two apparently well-educated persons concerning the Turks and the present war, and one of them said quite naturally: "Well, what can you expect of *heathens who worship Muhammad!*" Amazing and incredible as it may seem, I am certain that a great many respectable and in other respects fairly educated people in England really believe that we worship Muhammad, are compelled to have a great many wives, and that our women folk have no souls and cannot enter into Paradise! All these ideas are utterly mistaken. We worship Allah, the One and only God. "Thee only do we worship and of Thee alone do we beg for assistance," is part of the Muslim prayer, and we make no distinction between the prophets selected by the Almighty in various stages of the world's history. There is but one God, and Muhammad is the Prophet, the last prophet,

of God. Polygamy was rampant throughout Arabia before the advent of Muhammad, who merely regulated and placed restrictions on the number of wives a man might have. He also entirely put a stop to female infanticide as practised in Arabia before his time. At the present time very few Muslims have more than one wife, and women's position in the Muslim world is far better than it is in Christian countries.

I hope that steps may be taken to have this little work widely distributed, as I feel sure that a persual of its pages will bring enlightenment and comfort to those who may as yet be unaware of the true spirit of Islam, and may still be labouring under the delusions brought about either by want of correct information or by listening to those who should know better than to falsely represent a sister religion.

HEADLEY.

ISLAM

The Religion of Humanity.—Islam is the name by which the religion preached by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, who appeared in Arabia about thirteen hundred years ago, is known, and it is the last of the great religions of the world. This religion is commonly known in the West as Muhammadanism, a name adopted in imitation of such names as Christianity and Buddhism, but it is quite unknown to the Muslims themselves. According to the Quran, the sacred Book of Islam, the religion of Islam is as wide in its conception as humanity itself. It did not originate from the preaching of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, but it was as well the religion of the prophets that went before him. Islam was the religion of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: it was in fact, the religion of every prophet of God who appeared in any part of the world. Nay, Islam, is the religion of every human child that is born, according to the Holy Prophet, who, to be accurate, is not the originator, but the latest exponent of that Divine system. And, according to the Quran, Islam is the natural religion of man: "The nature made by Allah in which He has made all men—that is the right religion" (30:29). And since, according to the Quran, prophets were raised among different nations in different ages, and the religion of every prophet was, in its pristine purity, no other than Islam, the scope of this religion, in the true sense of the word, extends as far back, and is as wide, as humanity itself, the fundamental principles always remaining the same, the accidents changing with the changing needs of humanity. The latest phase of Islam is that which made its appearance in the world with the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him!

Significance of the Name.—The name Islam was not invented, as in the case of other religions, by those who pro-

fessed it. This name is, on the other hand, expressly given to this religion in the Holy Quran. It says: "I have chosen for you Islam as a religion" (5: 5). And in another place: "Verily the religion with Allah is Islam." It is, moreover, a significant name; in fact, the word Islam indicates the very essence of the religious system known by that name. Its primary significance is the "making of peace," and the idea of "peace" is the dominant idea in Islam. A Muslim, according to the Holy Quran, is he who has made his peace with God and man, with the Creator as well as His creatures. Peace with God implies complete submission to His will Who is the source of all purity and goodness, and peace with man implies the doing of good to fellow-man; and both these ideas are briefly but beautifully expressed in 2:106, which says: "Yea, he who submits himself entirely to Allah, and he is the doer of good (to others), these shall have no fear nor shall they grieve." That and that only is *salvation* according to the Holy Quran. And as the Muslim is in perfect peace, he enjoys peace of mind and contentment (16: 105). "Peace" is the greeting of one Muslim to another, and "Peace" shall also be the greeting of those in paradise: "And their greeting therein shall be peace" (10: 10). Nay, in the paradise which Islam depicts, no word shall be heard except "Peace, Peace" as the Holy Quran says: "They shall hear therein no vain words nor sinful discourse, but they shall hear only the words "Peace, Peace" (56: 26). The "Author of peace and safety" is also a name of God mentioned in the Holy Quran (59: 23), and the goal to which Islam leads is the "Abode of Peace," as is said in 10: 25: "And Allah invites to the abode of peace." Peace is, therefore, the essence of Islam, being the root from which it springs and the fruit which it yields, and Islam is thus pre-eminently the "Religion of Peace."

The Distinctive Characteristic of Islam.—The great characteristic of Islam is that it requires its followers to believe that all the great religions of the world that prevailed before it were revealed by God; and thus Islam laid down

the basis of peace and harmony among the religions of the world. According to the Holy Quran, all religions have Divine revelation as the common basis from which they start. The great mission of Islam was not, however, to preach this truth only, which, on account of the isolation from each other of the different nations of the earth, had not been preached before, but also to correct the errors which had found their way into various religions, to sift truth from error, to preach the truths which had not been preached before on account of the special circumstances of society or the early stage of its development, and most important of all, to gather together in one book the truths which were contained in any Divine revelation granted to any people for the guidance of man, and, last of all, to meet all the spiritual and moral requirements of an ever-advancing humanity. Accordingly the Holy Quran is spoken of as "pure pages wherein are (all the) right books" (98:2). And as a natural sequence it is declared: "This day have I made perfect for you your religion, and completed upon you my blessings, and chosen for you Islam as religion" (5:3). Islam thus requires us to believe in all truth revealed to any prophet of any nation, and to hold in the highest esteem and veneration all the prophets of all the nations. This broad-minded doctrine of the Holy Prophet Muhammad forms one of the most signal characteristics of the faith of Islam.

A Historical Religion.—I have said enough on the position of Islam among the religions of the world and the position of the Holy Quran among the sacred scriptures of the human race, but I wish to notice one more peculiarity of Islam by way of introduction. Islam is beyond all doubt a historical religion, and its holy founder a historical personage. It is a fact which even the hostile critic of Islam has to admit. Every event of the Holy Prophet's life can be read in the light of history, and the Holy Quran, which is the source of all the spiritual, moral, and social laws of Islam, is, as has been truly remarked by Bosworth Smith,

“a book absolutely unique in its origin, in its preservation. . . . on the substantial authenticity of which no one has ever been able to cast a serious doubt.” Even Muir admits that “there is probably in the world no other work which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text,” and adds with Von Hammer that “we hold the Quran to be as surely Muhammad’s word as the Muhammadans hold it to be the Word of God.” Having a book of Divine revelation so safely preserved through centuries to guide him for his spiritual and moral welfare, and the example of such a great and noble Prophet whose varied experiences in life furnish the best rules of conduct in all the different phases of human life, a Muslim is sure that he has not rejected any truth which was ever revealed by God to any nation, and that he has not set at naught any good which was to be found in the life of any good man. A Muslim thus not only believes in the truth of all Divine revelations and accepts the sacred leaders of all people, but also follows all the lasting and permanent truths contained in them, and imitates all good men in all the good that is to be found in their lives.

The Fundamental Principles of Islam.—The main principles of Islam are given in the very beginning of the Holy Quran, which opens with the words: “This book, there is no doubt in it, is a guidance for those who are careful of their duties—those who believe in the unseen and kept up prayer and spend out of what We have given them, and those who believe in what has been revealed to thee and what was revealed before thee and of the hereafter they are sure.” These verses point out the essential principles which must be accepted by those who would follow the Holy Quran. Here we have three main points of belief and two main points of practice, or three theoretical and two practical ordinances. Before I take up these points separately, I think it necessary to point out, as is indicated in these verses, that in Islam mere belief counts for nothing if not carried into practice. “Those who believe and do good” is the ever recurring description

of the righteous as given in the Quran. Right belief is the good seed which can only grow into a good tree if it receives nourishment from the soil in which it is placed. That nourishment is given by good deeds. Another point necessary to be borne in mind in connection with the five principles of belief and practice mentioned in the verses quoted above is that they are, in one form or other, universally accepted by the human race. The five principles as already indicated are (1) a belief in God, the Great Unseen, (2) in Divine revelation and (3) in the life to come; and on the practical side, (4) prayer to God which is the source from which springs the love of God, and (5) charity in its broadest sense, indicating respectively the performance of our duties to God and man. Now, these five principles as the principles of belief and action are recognized by all nations of the earth and these are the common principles on which all religions are based. In fact, these five fundamental principles of the holy religion of Islam are imprinted on human nature. Below I take them separately as detailed in the Holy Quran.

Conception of God in Islam.—Of the three fundamental principles of belief, the first is a belief in God. The belief in a power higher than man can be traced back to the remotest antiquity, to the earliest times to which history can take us, but different peoples in different ages and different countries have had different conceptions of the Divine being. Islam in the first place preaches a God Who is above all tribal deities and national gods. The God of Islam is not the God of a particular nation, so that He should confine His blessings to it alone, but He is described in the opening words of the Holy Quran to be the "Lord of the worlds," and thus, while giving the highest conception of the Divine Being, it also enlarges the circle of the brotherhood of man so as to include all nations of the earth, thereby widening the outlook and sympathies of man. Among the numerous sublime attributes of the Divine Being to which the Holy Quran gives expres-

sion, the attribute of mercy occupies the highest place. It is with the names *Ar-Rahmán* and *Ar-Rahím* that every chapter of the Holy Book opens. Beneficent and Merciful convey to the English reader of the Holy Quran only a very imperfect idea of the deep and all-encompassing love and mercy of God as indicated by the words *Ar-Rahmán* and *Ar-Rahím*. "My Mercy comprehends all (conceivable) things," says the Holy Quran (7: 156). Hence the Messenger who preached this conception of the Divine Being is rightly called in the Holy Quran "a mercy to all the worlds" (21: 107). Again, God is the Author of all that exists. A denial of His power of creation would have given a death-blow to the very loftiness and sublimity of the conception of the Divine Being. Here is but one description of His attributes: "He is Allah besides Whom there is none who should be served, the Knower of the unseen and the seen; He is the Beneficent, the Merciful. He is Allah besides Whom there is no God, the King, the Holy, the Author of Peace, the Granter of Security, Guardian over all, the Mighty, the Restorer of every loss, the Possessor of every greatness; high is Allah above what they set up with Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker,* the Fashioner. His are the most excellent and beautiful attributes [that man can imagine]; everything that exists in the heavens and the earth declares His glory and His perfection, and He is the Mighty, the Wise" (59: 22—24). He is God, the all-Hearing, the all-Seeing, the Deliverer from every affliction, the Generous, the Gracious, the Forgiving, the Near-at-hand Who loves good and hates evil, Who will take account of all human actions. There is a very large number of other attributes of the Divine Being which give a loftiness to the conception of God in the Quran not met with in any other revealed book.

The Unity of God.—Unity of God is the one great theme of the Holy Quran. The laws of nature which we find work-

*The original word for Maker is *Bári*, which signifies especially, the Maker of souls, as distinct from the Creator of matter.

ing in the universe, man's own nature, and the teachings of the prophets of yore are again and again appealed to as giving clear indication of the Unity of the Maker. Consider the creation of the innumerable heavenly bodies: are they not with their apparent diversities all subject to one and the same law? Think over what you see in the earth itself, its organic and inorganic worlds, the plant and animal life, the solid earth, the seas and the rivers, the great mountains: is there not unity in all this diversity? Ponder over your own nature, how your very colours and tongues differ from one another, yet in spite of all these differences are you not but a single people? Look at the constant change which everything in this universe is undergoing, the making and unmaking, the creation and re-creation of all things, the course of which does not stop for a single instant: is there not a uniform law discernible in this? If, in fact, you clearly observe uniformity in diversity in nature, do you not see therein a clear sign of the Unity of the Maker? Then look to the incontestible evidence of human nature, how even when believing in the plurality of gods, it recognizes a unity in the very plurality, and thus bears testimony to the oneness of God. Again, turn over the pages of the sacred scriptures of all religions, search out the teachings of the great spiritual guides of all nations; they will all testify to the oneness of the Divine Being. In short, the laws of nature, the nature of man, and the testimony of the righteous men of all ages, all declare with one voice the Unity of God, and this is the cardinal doctrine of the spiritual teachings of the faith of Islam.

Divine Revelation.—The second fundamental principle of faith in the Islamic religion is belief in the Divine revelation, not only a belief in the truth of the revealed Word of God as found in the Holy Quran, but a belief in the truth of Divine revelation in all ages and to all nations of the earth. Divine revelation is the basis of all revealed religions, but

the principle is accepted subject to various limitations. Some religions consider revelation to have been granted to mankind only once; others look upon it as limited to a particular people; while others still close the door of revelation after a certain time. With the advent of Islam we find the same breadth of view introduced into the conception of Divine revelation as in the conception of the Divine Being. The Holy Quran recognizes no limit of any kind to Divine revelation, neither in respect of time nor in respect of the nationality of the individual to whom it may be granted. It regards all people as having at one time or other received Divine revelation, and it announces the door of it to be open now or in the future in the same manner as it was open in the past.* Without the assistance of revelation from God no people could have ever attained to communion with God, and hence it was necessary that Almighty God, Who, being the Lord of the whole world, supplied all men with their physical necessities, should have also brought to them His spiritual blessings. In this case, too, Islam, while sharing with other faiths the belief in the fact of Divine revelation refuses to acknowledge the existence of any limitation as regards time or place.

There is also another aspect of the Islamic belief in Divine revelation in which it differs from some other religions of the world. It refuses to acknowledge the incarnation of the Divine Being. That the highest aim of religion is communion with God is a fact universally recognized. According to the Holy Quran, this communion is not attained by God assuming a human shape in the sense of incarnation, but by man rising gradually towards God by spiritual progress and the purification of his life from all sensual desires and

*The fact that the Holy Quran speaks of the Holy Prophet Muhammad as the last prophet is not inconsistent with this view, for the granting of revelation to non-prophets is expressly recognised.

low motives. The perfect one who reveals the face of God to the world is not the Divine Being in human form, but the human being whose person has become a manifestation of the Divine attributes by his own personality having been consumed in the fire of the love of God. His example serves as an incentive and is a model for others to follow. He shows by his example how a mere mortal can attain to communion with God. Hence the broad principle of Islam that no one is precluded from attaining communion with God and from being fed from the source of Divine revelation, and that any one can attain it by following the right way.

Life after Death.—Belief in a future life, in one form or another, is also common to all religions of the world, and it is the third fundamental article of a Muslim's faith. The mystery of the life after death has, however, nowhere been solved so clearly as in Islam. The idea of a life after death was so obscure till as late as the appearance of the Jewish religion that not only is there not much of it found in the Old Testament, but an important Jewish sect actually denied any such state of existence. This was, however, due to the fact that much light was not thrown upon it in earlier revelation. The belief in transmigration was also due to the undeveloped mind of man mistaking spiritual realities for physical facts. In Islam the idea reached its perfection, as did other important fundamental principles of religion. Belief in a future life implies the accountability of man in another life for actions done in this. The belief is no doubt a most valuable basis for the moral elevation of the world if properly understood. The following points are particularly laid stress on by the Holy Quran.

Life after Death is only a Continuation of the Life below.—The gulf that is generally interposed between this life and the life after death is the great obstacle in the solution of the mystery of the hereafter. Islam makes that gulf dis-

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appear altogether: it makes the next life as only a continuation of the present life. On this point the Holy Quran is explicit. It says: "We have (in this very life) bound the consequences of a man's deeds about his neck, and (these hidden consequences) We will bring to light on the day of resurrection in the form of a book wide open" (17: 14). And again it says: "He who is blind in this life shall also be blind in the next life—nay he shall be straying farther off from the path" (17:74). And elsewhere we have: 'O soul at rest! return to thy Lord, He being pleased with thee and thou being pleased with Him; so enter among My servants and enter into My paradise" (79: 27). The first of these three verses makes it clear that the great facts which shall be brought to light on the day of resurrection shall not be anything new, but only a manifestation of what is hidden from the physical eye here. The life after death is, therefore, not a new life, but only a continuation of this life, bringing its hidden realities to light. The other two quotations show that a hellish and a heavenly life both begin in this world. The blindness of the next life is hell, but according to the verse quoted only those who are blind here shall be blind hereafter, thus making it clear that the spiritual blindness of this life is the real hell, and from here it is carried along to the next life. Similarly it is the soul that has found perfect peace and rest that is made to enter into paradise at death, thus showing that the paradise of the next life is only a continuation of the peace and rest which a man enjoys spiritually in this life. Thus it is clear that, according to the Holy Quran, the next life is a continuation of this, and death is not an interruption but a connecting link, a door that opens upon the hidden realities of this life.

State after Death is an Image of the Spiritual State in this Life.—With Islam the most significant truth with regard to the next life has been brought to light. In the Christian teaching the corporal and the spiritual are melted together, the

weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth and the quenchless fire as the punishment of the wicked are spoken of in the same breath with the kingdom of heaven, the treasure in heaven and the life eternal as the reward of the righteous, but there is no clear indication as to the sources of the one or the other. The Holy Quran, on the other hand, makes it clear that the state after death is a complete representation, a full and clear image, of our spiritual state in this life. Here the good or bad conditions of the deeds or beliefs of a man are latent within him, and their poison or panacea casts its influence upon him only secretly, but in the life to come they shall become manifest and clear as daylight. The shape which our deeds and their consequences assume in this very life is not visible to the eye of man in this life, but in the next life it will be unrolled and laid open before him in all its clearness. The pleasures and pains of the next life, therefore, though spiritual in reality will not be hidden from the ordinary eye as spiritual facts are in this life. It is for this reason that while on the one hand the blessings of the next life are mentioned by physical names as an evidence of their clear representation to the eye, they are on the other hand spoken of as things which "the eye has not seen, nor has the ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive of them." This description of the blessings of the next life is really an explanation given by the Holy Prophet himself of the verse of the Quran which says: "No soul knows the blessings and joys which have been kept secret for it" (32: 17).

The following verse of the Holy Quran, which may ordinarily be misunderstood, is far from describing the heavenly blessings as being identical with the things of this world. It runs thus: "Bear glad tidings to those who believe and do good that they shall have gardens in which rivers flow. As often as they are made to taste of the fruits thereof, they shall say, These are the fruits which we were made to taste

formerly; and they shall be given the like of it" (2: 23). Now the fruits which the righteous are made to speak of as having tasted in this life could not possibly be the fruits of trees or the things of this life. The verse, in fact, tells us that those who believe and do good works prepare a paradise with their own hands for themselves, with their good deeds for fruits. It is of the fruits of this garden that they are spiritually made to taste here, and of the same, only in a more palpable form, shall they eat in the next life. To the same effect we may quote another verse of the Holy Quran: "On that day thou shalt see the faithful men and the faithful women, their light running before them and on their right hands" (57: 12). This verse shows that the light of faith by which the righteous men and women were guided in this life, and which could here be seen only with the spiritual eye, shall be clearly seen going before the believers on the day of resurrection.

As in the case of the blessings of paradise, the punishment of hell is also an image of the spiritual tortures of this life. Hell is said to be a place where one shall neither live nor die (20: 76). It should be remembered in this connection that the Quran describes those who walk in error and wickedness as dead and lifeless, while the good, it calls living. The secret of this is that the means of the life of those who are ignorant of God being simply eating and drinking and the satisfaction of physical desires, are entirely cut off at their death. Of spiritual food they have no share, and, therefore, while devoid of true life, they shall be raised again to taste of the evil consequences of their evil deeds.

Next Life is a Life of Unlimited Progress.—The third point of importance which throws light on the mystery of the life after death is that man is destined to make infinite progress in that life. Underlying this is the principle that the

development of man's faculties as it takes place in this life, however unlimited, is not sealed by finality; but a much wider vista of the realms to be traversed opens out after death. Those who have wasted their opportunity in this life shall, under the inevitable law which makes every man taste of what he has done, be subjected to a course of treatment of the spiritual diseases which they have brought about with their own hands, and when the effect of the poison which has vitiated their system has been nullified, and they are fit to start on the onward journey to the great goal, they shall no more be in hell. This is the reason that the punishment of hell according to the Holy Quran is not everlasting. It is meant to clean a man of the dross which is a hindrance in his spiritual progress, and when that object has been effected, its need vanishes. Nor is paradise a place to enjoy the blessings only of one's previous good deeds, but it is the starting-point of the development of the faculties of man. Those in paradise shall not be idle, but they shall be continually exerting themselves to reach the higher stages. It is for this reason that they are taught to pray even there to their Lord, "O our Lord! make perfect for us our light" (67: 8). This unceasing desire for perfection shows clearly that progress in paradise shall be endless. For when they shall have attained one excellence they shall see a higher stage of excellence, and considering that to which they shall have attained as imperfect, shall desire the attainment of the higher excellence. This ceaseless desire for perfection shows that they shall be endlessly attaining to higher and higher planes.

Belief in Angels and its Significance.—I have now briefly indicated the three fundamental principles of a Muslim's faith, but I may further add that belief in the unseen also includes a belief in those agencies which we call angels. This belief, though common to many religions, is not as widely

accepted as the three principles explained above, and therefore a few remarks relating to the truth underlying this belief will not be out of place here. In the physical world we find it as an established law that we stand in need of external agents notwithstanding the faculties and powers within us. The eye has been given to us to see things, and it does see them, but not without the help of external light. The ear receives the sound, but independently of the agency of air it cannot serve that purpose. Man therefore essentially stands in need of some thing besides what is within him, and as in the physical, so also in the spiritual world. Just as our physical faculties are not by themselves sufficient to enable us to attain any object in the physical world without the assistance of other agents, so our own spiritual powers cannot by themselves lead us to do good or evil deeds, but here, too, intermediaries which have an existence independent of our internal spiritual powers are necessary to enable us to do good or evil deeds. In other words, there are two attractions placed in the nature of man: the attraction to good or to rise up to higher spheres of virtue, and the attraction to evil, or to stoop down to a kind of low, bestial life; but to bring these attractions into operation external agencies are needed, as they are needed in the case of the physical powers of man. The external agency which brings the attraction to good into work is called an angel, and that which assists in the working of the attraction to evil is called the devil. If we respond to the attraction for good we are following the Holy Spirit, and if we respond to the attraction for evil we are following Satan. The real significance of belief in angels is, therefore, that we should follow the inviter to good or the attraction for good which is placed within us.

Significance of Belief.—The above remarks explain not only the significance of a Muslim's belief in angels, but

also the meaning underlying the very word "belief." Belief according to Islam is not only a conviction of the truth of a given proposition, but it is essentially the acceptance of a proposition as a basis for action. As already shown, the proposition of the existence of the devils is as true as that of the existence of the angels; but while belief in angels is again and again mentioned as part of a Muslim's faith, nowhere are we required to believe in the devils. Both facts are equally true, and the Holy Quran speaks on numerous occasions of the misleadings and insinuations of the devils, but while it requires a belief in the angels, it does not require a belief in the devils. If belief in angels were only an equivalent to an admission of their existence, a belief in devils was an equal necessity. But it is not so. The reason is that whereas man is required to accept and follow the call of the inviter to good, he is required not to follow the call of the inviter to evil, and, therefore, as the former gives a basis for action which the latter does not, we believe in the angels but not in the devils. On the other hand, the Holy Quran requires a disbelief in the devils: "Therefore he who disbelieves in the devils and believes in Allah, has surely laid hold on the firmest handle" (2: 257). It would thus be seen that the principles of belief enumerated above as given in the Holy Quran are really principles, each of which serves as a basis for action, and no other belief is known to Islam.

Principles of Action.—Next we take the practical side of the faith of Islam. As I have already said, in Islam actions are as essentially a component part of religion as belief. In this respect Islam occupies a middle position between religions which have ignored the practical side altogether and those which bind their followers to a very minute ritual. It sees the necessity of developing the faculties of man by giving general directions, and then leaves ample scope for the individual to exercise his judiciousness. Without a strong practical character any religion is likely to pass into

mere idealism, and it will cease to exercise influence on the practical life of man. The precepts of Islam, which inculcate duties towards God and duties towards man are based on that deep knowledge of the human nature which cannot be possessed but by the Author of that nature. They cover the whole range of the different grades of the development of man, and are thus wonderfully adapted to the requirements of different peoples. In the Holy Quran are found guiding rules for the ordinary man of the world as well as the philosopher, and for communities in the lowest grade of civilization as well as the most highly civilized nations of the world. Practicality is the keynote of its precepts, and thus the same universality which marks its principles of faith is met with in its practical ordinances, suiting as they do the requirements of all ages and nations.

Prayer.—The verses of the Holy Quran which I have quoted above form, as I have already said, the nucleus of the teachings of Islam. Taken in the broadest sense, the two principles of action mentioned in these verses stand for the fulfilment of man's duties towards God and his duties towards man. Prayer to God is the essence of man's duties towards God. Prayer is an outpouring of the heart's sentiments, a devout supplication to God, and a reverential expression of the soul's sincerest desires before its Maker. In Islam the idea of prayer, like all other religious ideas, finds its highest development. Prayer, according to the Holy Quran, is the true means of that purification of the heart which is the only way to communion with God. The Holy Quran says: "Rehearse that which has been revealed to thee of the Book and be constant at prayer, for prayer restrains from that which is evil and blamable, and the glorifying of Allah is surely a great thing" (29:45). Islam, therefore, enjoins prayer as a means of the moral elevation of man. Prayer degenerating into mere ritual, into a lifeless

and vapid ceremony gone through with insincerity of heart, is not the prayer enjoined by Islam. Such prayer is expressly denounced: "Woe to the praying ones who are careless in their prayers, and who make only a show" (107:4-6).

Fasting.—Fasting is also enjoined by the Holy Quran as a means to the purification of the soul. Fasting, however, does not mean abstaining from food only, but from every kind of evil. In fact, abstention from food is only a step to make a man realize that if he can, in obedience to God, abstain from that which is otherwise lawful, how much more necessary is it that he should abstain from the evil ways which are forbidden by God! That moral elevation is the object of this institution is clearly stated in the Holy Quran, which says: "Fasting has been enjoined upon you . . . that you may learn to guard yourselves against evil" (2:183).

Pilgrimage.—The pilgrimage to Mecca represents the last stage in spiritual advancement. It represents the stage in which all the lower connexions of man are entirely cut off, and, completely surrendering himself to Divine will, he sacrifices all his interests for His sake. The true lover finds his highest satisfaction in sacrificing his very heart and soul for the beloved one's sake, and the circuit round the house of God is an emblem or external manifestation of it. The pilgrim shows by the external act of making a circuit round the Kaba that the fire of Divine love has been kindled within his heart, and like the true lover he makes circuits round the house of his beloved one. He shows, in fact, that he has given up his own will and completely surrendered it to that of his beloved Master, and that he has sacrificed all his interests for His sake.

It will thus be seen that all these Islamic precepts are only meant for the moral elevation of man. Islam does not lay

down any institution which may be said to be a meaningless worship of God; the aim and object of all the precepts it gives is the purification of the heart, so that thus purified, man may enjoy communion with the Holy One Who is the Fountain-head of all purity.

Man's Duties to Man.—The second branch of the Islamic precepts relates to man's duties towards man, but it should be borne in mind that both kinds of precepts are very closely interrelated. The moral elevation of man is the grand theme of the Holy Quran and the chief object which Islam has in view throughout; and all its precepts are only meant to raise humanity step by step to the highest moral elevation to which man can attain. "The person who violates his brother's right is not a believer in the Unity of God" is a teaching which deserves to be written in letters of gold.

The Brotherhood of Islam.—In the first place, Islam abolishes all invidious class distinctions. "Surely the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most righteous of you" sounds the death-knell of all superiority or inferiority based on rigid caste and social distinctions. Mankind is but one family according to the Holy Quran which says: "O men, We have created you all of a male and female and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most careful of his duties" (49: 13). Islam thus lays down the basis of a vast brotherhood in which all men and women, to whatever tribe or nation or caste they may belong and whatever be their profession or rank in society, the wealthy and the poor, have equal rights, and in which no one can trample upon the rights of his brother. In this brotherhood all members should treat each other as members of the same family. The slave is to be clothed

with the clothing and fed with the food of his master, and he is not to be treated as a low or vile person. "Your wives," says the Holy Quran, "have rights against you as you have rights against them" (2: 229). No one is to be deprived of any right on the score of his caste or profession or sex. And this great brotherhood did not remain a brotherhood in theory, but became an actual living force by the noble example of the Holy Prophet and his worthy successors and companions. The strict rule of brotherhood is laid down in the following words of the Holy Prophet: "No one of you is a believer in God until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."

Respect for Authority.—But while thus establishing equality of rights, Islam teaches the highest respect for authority. The home is the real nursery in which the moral training of man begins, and therefore the Holy Quran lays the greatest stress upon obedience to parents. Here is one of the passages of the Holy Quran: "And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve others than Him, and that to your parents you shall do good; if either or both of them reach old age with you, say not to them so much as 'ugh,' nor chide them, and address to them generous words. And lower to them the wing of humility out of compassion, and say, 'O Lord, have compassion on them as they brought me up when I was little'" (17: 23-24). It is elsewhere said that they should be disobeyed only if they compel one to serve others than God. This high reverence for parents is the basis from which springs up the high moral of respect for all authority. And thus the Holy Quran plainly says: "Obey God and the Apostle and those in authority from among you" (4: 62). By those in authority are meant not only the actual rulers of a country, but all those who are in any way entrusted with authority. It has been remarked by the Holy Prophet: "Every one of you is a ruler, and

every one of you shall be questioned about those among whom he is in authority." According to a tradition of the Holy Prophet, even if a negro slave is placed in authority, he must be obeyed. But when an authority requires obedience against the Quran and the Sunnah, it is not to be obeyed. As the parents are to be disobeyed when they compel one to serve others than God, so an authority must be disobeyed when its orders conflict with the Quran and the Sunnah. The first Khalifa Abu Bakr laid down a rule at the time of his succession which must be written in letters of gold: "If I go aright, help me, but if I err, *correct me.*" "Obey me," continued he, "so long as I obey God and His Apostle, but when I disobey God and His Apostle, *I am not to be obeyed.*" "One of the most meritorious deeds," observed the Holy Prophet, "is to address a word of remonstrance to a tyrannical ruler."

Charity.—Equality of rights and the highest respect for authority are thus the basic principles of Muslim society, and I cannot here enter into the vast details of the superstructure raised on this foundation. But I should note one more peculiarity of the brotherhood of Islam. Every religion of the world has preached charity and the giving of alms, but it is in Islam only that it has been made obligatory and binding upon all those who accept the Muslim faith. Here we have a brotherhood into which the rich man cannot enter unless and until he is willing to give a part of his possessions for the support of the poorer members of the brotherhood. There is no doubt that the rich man is not here confronted with the insuperable difficulty of the ideal test of the camel passing through the eye of the needle, but he is subjected to a practical test which not only makes him stand on the same footing with his poorest brother, but also requires him to pay a tax—a tax which is levied on the rich for the benefit of the poor. Every one who possesses property above

a certain limit is required to set apart a stated portion thereof. The portion so set apart should be collected by the Muslim state or the Imam, and the objects to which it must be devoted are enumerated in the following verse: "The alms are only for the poor, and the needy, and the officials appointed over them, and those whose hearts are made to incline to truth, and the ransoming of captives and those in debt, and in the way of Allah, and the wayfarer" (9:60). The words *way of Allah* include every charitable purpose. Besides the contributions the payment of which has thus been made obligatory by the Holy Quran, and made as compulsory as the saying of prayers, general charity is inculcated very forcibly throughout the Holy Book. Freeing the slaves and feeding the poor are again and again described to be deeds of the highest virtue. For instance, the Holy Quran says: "What shall make thee know what the great steep is? It is to free the captive, or feed in time of famine an orphan who is a kin, or a poor man who lies in the dust" (90: 12-14).

Scope of Moral Teachings.—The Holy Quran was not meant for one people or one age, and accordingly the scope of its moral teachings is as wide as humanity itself. It is a Book which offers guidance to all men in all conditions of life, to the ignorant savage as well as to the wise philosopher, to the man of business as well as to the recluse, to the rich as well as to the poor. Accordingly, while giving varied rules of life, it appeals to the individual to follow the best rules which are applicable to the circumstances under which he lives. If it contains directions on the one hand which are calculated to raise men in the lowest grades of civilisation and to teach them the crude manners of society, it also furnishes rules of guidance to men in the highest stages of moral and spiritual progress. High ideal moral teachings are no doubt necessary to the progress of man, but only those who can realize those ideals will be able to benefit by them. But to

this class do not belong the vast masses in any nation or community, however high may be its standard of civilization. Hence the Quran contains rules of guidance for all the stages through which man has to pass in the onward march from the condition of the savage to that of the highly spiritual man. They cover all the branches of human activity and require the development of all the faculties of man. Islam requires the display of every quality that has been placed in man, and makes only one limitation—*viz.* that it should be displayed on the proper occasion. It requires a man to show meekness as well as courage, but each on its proper occasion. It teaches forgiveness, but at the same time it requires that when the nature of an offence requires punishment, punishment proportionate to the crime must be administered. It says, Forgive when you see that forgiveness would be conducive to good. Again, it teaches men to display high morals under the most adverse circumstances, to be honest even when honesty is likely to lead one into complications, to speak truth even when one's truthful statement is against those nearest and dearest to one, to show sympathy even at the sacrifice of one's own interest, to be patient under the hardest afflictions, to be good even to those who have done evil. At the same time it teaches the middle path; it teaches men to exercise the noble qualities which have been placed in their nature by God while transacting their own affairs. It does not inculcate severance from one's worldly connections; it requires men to be chaste, but not by castration; it requires them to serve God, but not as monks; it enjoins them to spend their wealth, but not in such a manner as to sit down "blamed and straitened in means;" it teaches them to be submissive, but not by losing self-respect; it exhorts them to forgive, but not in such a manner as to embolden culprits; it allows them to exercise all their rights, but not so as to violate others'; and, last of all, it requires them to preach their own religion, but not by abusing others.'

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BY THE REV. FATHER JOHN...

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OF
THE HOLY QURAN

(WITHOUT ARABIC TEXT)

WITH SHORT NOTES AND INTRODUCTION

BY

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